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Letter From the Editor

It's hard to believe, but the 2018 PAGE Awards Late Entry Deadline is already here! While you can still submit your screenplay after March 15, it will cost a little more. Why not save a few bucks for brads and three-hole-punch paper (haha, that's an old-timer joke for you) and get the entry in now? Just like so many of our past winners, entering your script in the contest could prove to be a life-changing, career-making decision for you.

And to help get you ready for your big break, our spring edition of the **LOGLINE** eZine has plenty of fresh industry intel for you...

We begin with PAGE Gold Prize winner Andy Byrne, who tells us how he's begun a promising Hollywood career while based in Australia. PAGE Judge Victoria Lucas breaks down the characteristics of a killer climax. Script consultant Ray Morton offers an overview of his criteria for the coveted "Recommend." Dr. Format himself, Dave Trottier, introduces the PRE-LAP and explains how to use this transition in your script. Career coach Lee Jessup asks working writers and industry pros to explain the utility of outlines. And finally, we end the issue with three "hot leads" from our friends at InkTip! Do you have a script that fits the bill?

Happy reading,

Latest News From the PAGE Awards

◆ More great news coming in from our 2017 winners... Gold Prize winner Miley Tunnecliffe and Silver Prize winner Jerome Velinsky have both signed with Krista Carpenter and Chris Deckard at Fictional Entity, Gold Prize winner Clifford Yost has signed with John Ferraro at Valleywood Entertainment, and Silver Prize winners Jonathan Smith and Ian Masters have signed with PAGE Judge Derrick Eppich at Lee Stobby Entertainment.

◆ For the past two years, 2015 PAGE Gold Prize winner Niall Queenan has been working as a story assistant on the Irish TV series **Red Rock**, a crime drama based in a Dublin Garda station. The show airs Monday nights on TV3 in Ireland and the first season is now available to view on Amazon Prime. Niall also recently wrote a feature conspiracy thriller called **The Conduit**, which Robert Putka is attached to direct, and he's working on the pilot episode for the action-thriller series **Armed Response**. Based in Dublin, Niall is represented by PAGE Judge Peter Katz at Story Driven.

◆ 2006 PAGE Gold Prize winner Scott Perlman wrote and directed the new movie **Andover**, starring Jonathan Silverman, Jennifer Finnigan and Richard Kind. **Andover** won Best Picture, Best Actress and the Audience Award at the Orlando Film Festival in October, and it was the closing film in February's DC Independent Film Festival. The film will open in select theaters later this spring, released by Gravitass.

◆ 2014 PAGE Bronze Prize winner Dan O'Dair wrote the new sports drama **High & Outside**, starring Phil Donlon, Ernie Hudson and Geoffrey Lewis. The movie, which has screened at the Raindance Film Festival and Austin Film Festival, is playing at Cinequest in San Jose this week. As a result of his PAGE win, Dan was hired to adapt the novel **Dove Season** into a feature film. His PAGE Award-winning drama **Hernando De Soto Has Never Been Here** is slated to begin filming this summer.

The 2018 PAGE Awards Late Entry Deadline: March 15, 2018

The Tyranny of Perception

by Andy Byrne

I can't see the Hollywood sign from my leafy backyard. The view's obscured by the L.A. smog... and the 7,500 miles of Pacific Ocean between there and my house in Sydney, Australia.

Sydney is 19 hours ahead of L.A. The flight time is 15 hours. Which means that trying to get to L.A. for a sudden next-day meeting risks triggering a time paradox. It also means that, as a screenwriter, I'm behind the eight-ball when it comes to networking, industry events and getting my name out there. Yes, it's an obstacle. It has impacts. But whether you live in L.A. or not, screenwriting is, by its very nature, a procession of obstacles anyway – a veritable conga-line of complications.

Four years ago, when I decided to get serious about screenwriting, I knew I couldn't just uproot and move. I was 42. My wife Lin and I had a newborn and a mortgage on the 1920s bungalow we were restoring by ourselves. And I'd been there before, without those responsibilities. In 2003, while doing journalistic writing and radio production, an idea for a film itched its way to the surface.

I had to write it. **The Station** was about a group of societal rejects hiding their lives away in a remote train junction until the Russian Civil War sweeps through, spurring them to run or fight. When I finished the script, I looked at how far away I was from L.A. and shelved both the script and my creative aspirations.

Fast forward to 2013. Creatively, I was mirroring my protagonist in **The Station** – a man who daily had to clamp down his aspirations under a veneer of pragmatism. But deep down, something nudged, creaked and rumbled, and I found myself editing that script. With a "what the hell" shrug I submitted it to a couple of prestigious screenwriting competitions. It made the semifinals in both.

Now my view tilted. When you live overseas and the aim is to get your work before potential customers, submitting your work to contests is one of your best chances to get noticed – if the work is good enough. So I focused on doing just that. Only I focused a teensy bit too hard. The next year, I submitted a revised version of **The Station** and a sci-fi script to several contests. The judges shredded them, hated them. After an hour of moping, I launched into a script autopsy and saw how I'd complicated the hell out of my plots. I'd forgotten to write by feel.

I experimented with my writing style and along the way I started to feel my voice. Out of this came the story of a woman responding to an unclear, yet obsessive desire to disconnect from the highly connected world around her. **Disconn** picked up two awards in 2016: the PAGE Gold Prize for Science Fiction and an International Screenwriters Association Fellowship. The ISA win included a trip to L.A. for a week of inspiring meetings with execs, directors and writers. I soaked it up like a trip to the moon, collecting data in case I never made it back again.

The PAGE win blew my mind with the read requests I was getting. Very shortly after winning the contest,

I had two possible management opportunities. I went with lit manager Chris Watkins at Catapult Entertainment Group – a man who can spot a typo from space. He and producer/director Kevin Goetz got **Disconn** before an A-list actor the next day, and we're still working back and forth on the project.

Catapult also needed a writer for a project they had the rights to, and I loved its **Twilight Zone**-esque premise. But now came the test – doing all this from Sydney, where I was anchored to a full-time day job. I still couldn't hop over to L.A. for script development meetings, so we did it all via phone and email. Every fortnight or so, we ran a 30-minute phone conference.

I learned that not having face-to-face meetings just means being even more attentive in your listening, when words are garbled by a phone speaker or Skype. Virtual development meetings are otherwise the same as in-person ones – you just look for the notes behind the notes.

My writing time was jammed into a block at the end of the day. I'd get home from work,

have dinner and story-time for our four year-old, Julian. Then I'd start writing around 8 p.m., wrapping around 1 or 2, sometimes 3 a.m. Up again at 5 a.m. Extra "fun" when you add a 6 a.m. phone meeting with L.A. to discuss the minutiae of a character arc. But I was determined to deliver a completed script within three months. In my view, if I was going to be able to compete with a full-time screenwriter, I had to do it in the same timeframe or better.

The result of this crazy period was **The Orphan Dialogues**, which starts production in late March. But once that script was done, I was immediately back working on **Disconn**, and also started developing a concept I'd pitched called **Silo**, which immediately got interest. And so it was straight back to the phone conferences and emails. It feels like normal now.

Of course, during all this, you keep developing new ideas and new contacts (again via email). You follow industry news, watch which producer is looking for what. It slowly builds, but only if you build it.

At the end of the day, when it comes to establishing your screenwriting career, this tyranny of distance really is nothing more than a tyranny of perception. You get the opportunities not because of where you live, but because of what you write.



Andy Byrne won a PAGE Gold Prize in 2016 for his science fiction spec **Disconn**. He has three films currently in development and has just been asked to pen a fourth. For this latest project, he's been invited back to L.A. to pitch Ridley Scott's Scott Free Productions. It's going to be a busy year! Andy says he couldn't do any of this without his wife Lin and their son Julian.

Four Ingredients of a Great Climax

by Victoria Lucas

Years ago, as a junior development executive at an indie production company, I was in charge of evaluating scripts from new writers or smaller agencies. With most of them, frankly, it was easy to say, "We'll pass." But one script was different. It had a great hook, catching my interest in the first few scenes. It had compelling characters and a couple of unusual set pieces. I was so engrossed in the story I could hardly turn the pages fast enough.

The script stayed strong until the third act when, to my dismay, it became a jumbled mess. The action scenes were bloated and clichéd, the character resolution forced and unsatisfying. I called the agent to ask if the writer would be willing to work on the ending, bringing it up to the level of the rest of the script. Nope. Both the agent and the writer (who had never sold a script) said I should simply present the screenplay to the producers as is and tell them, "We can fix it later."

Well, you can guess how that turned out. Despite my best efforts, I couldn't persuade my company to option the script, so we moved on.

Why do so many scripts fall apart in the third act?

You spend a great deal of time developing your inciting incident in the beginning of your script, setting up the question, "What will happen?" Your third-act climax has to answer that question – **this** is what happens – with an exciting and dynamic payoff. Don't deny the audience what they crave: a satisfying conclusion, one that is both surprising and believable.

If you're having problems with your third act, here are four questions to ask yourself...

1. Have you boxed yourself in with your set pieces?

You've written some huge action set pieces in the second act, but now you have to top them in the third act. You're tempted to escalate the action ever higher to make the climax seem more important. But remember, that third act needs to be true to what came before. You began constructing the climax in Act I. If your climax doesn't seem significant without artificial escalation, then your problem might well be in the first two acts, where you laid the groundwork for it.

And please don't mistake action for intensity. Think of the scene that launches Act III in *Get Out*. As Chris and Rose come down the stairs, he's desperate to get out of the house. There's almost no physical action, but the tension is almost unbearable. Rose's line, "You know I can't give you the keys, right babe?" has as much impact as any explosion.

2. What can your script bring to the table that's innovative?

Is your climax unique and inventive, or does it feel generic and stale? It's important to give the ending of your script a distinct personality. An "ordinary" action scene can become more interesting just by placing it in an original location, such as in the final sequence on Mount Rushmore in *North by Northwest*.

Think about it. What's the most unusual place you could stage a fight scene, chase or confrontation that could make that final sequence in your script come alive?

Whatever your genre, you have to give the audience what they crave and expect, and at the same time know when to reverse or break from genre conventions.

3. Does your protagonist change and/or grow?

Are the character's goals real, clear and significant? In some action scripts (the James Bond movies, for example) the main character is pretty much the same at the end as in the beginning. But even a hard action film benefits from a nuanced lead character, and the most satisfying endings come as we learn the protagonist's personal story, such as in the Bourne series. Even in the most elaborate set pieces, without substantial personal stakes for your protagonist the climax will feel mechanical and routine.

Always try to add something the audience isn't expecting. Don't play it safe – push your characters and pile on the complications. Your main character has to earn the ending, whether it's triumphant, happy or sad. Consider, what is the most intense crisis your protagonist can face? Good. Double it.

4. Does your climax resolve the main conflict in your story?

This doesn't necessarily mean saving the world from an asteroid or stopping an assassination; it can also mean the protagonist facing a personal demon. The most satisfying endings let the audience see the central conflict resolved.

Think about the excruciatingly tense third act of *The Silence of the Lambs*, where Clarice Starling descends blindly into Buffalo Bill's basement to rescue the kidnapped girl. Not only does the sequence pay off physically by achieving Clarice's external goal – catching the serial killer and proving her worth – but it's also a great example of a character facing her greatest nightmare in the process. She has the chance to save the screaming "lamb" of her childhood terror – and this time, she succeeds.

Whatever genre you're writing, you have to leave the audience with the right emotion for your story. Has your hero been triumphant? Has he reached his goal? Has she been able to do something at the end of the movie that she wasn't able to do at the start? A great ending can bolster a mediocre script, while a bad ending can deep-six a good one.

Give a junior development executive a screenplay with three strong acts and a great ending, and she just might be able to convince her boss to buy it!



Victoria Lucas has almost 20 years of experience as a development and production executive at major studios and independent film companies. She began her career at Imagine Entertainment, later going on to develop feature films with companies such as Signature Entertainment, April Productions and Capella-Connexion Films. She currently works as an independent producer and screenplay consultant.

Five Key Components of a Good Script

by Ray Morton

When analyzing a screenplay, I focus on five key components of the piece...

1. PREMISE

The first question I ask when assessing a script's premise is, "does it have one?" You may think it impossible to write a script without a premise, but I often receive scripts that consist of lots of scenes and characters but lack a workable narrative hook. If it has a premise, I ask if it's interesting – is the concept compelling in some way that will grab an audience's attention? Is it novel? Clever, or controversial? If the answer is yes, can it generate enough conflict, action, suspense, romance, spectacle and/or humor to create an entertaining feature-length film?

2. STORY

The first thing I assess when evaluating a script's story is whether or not it is related to the premise. This may sound like a no-brainer, but I have read many scripts in which the tale being told has little to do with the stated premise. Even if the narrative is a good one, when the story doesn't match the concept it's never going to gel into a successful whole. The next thing I look at is how well the story develops the premise – does it make the most of its inherent dramatic potential? Now it's time to look at the structure – specifically, does the story have a solid beginning, middle and end? A properly constructed narrative needs all three.

Other story-related items to evaluate: Are the world, characters and premise clearly established in the first act? Does the story clearly establish its own internal logic and then adhere to it? Is the story free of coincidence and convenience? Does each scene advance the story in a clear and meaningful way? Does the plot have a steady build from the inciting incident to the inevitable climax? Do we see things happening (as opposed to being told about things that happened)?

3. CHARACTERS

When it comes to assessing a script's characters, I begin by determining if the piece has a clear and identifiable protagonist – a lead character who develops an important goal at the end of Act I and whose pursuit of that goal drives the action of the story ever forward. The protagonist should gradually undergo a profound and permanent change as a result of his or her experiences in the tale.

Once I have identified the protagonist, I look to see if he or she is interesting and sympathetic. I do not necessarily believe a protagonist needs to be "likable," but I believe we must be able to invest ourselves emotionally in him and his story. I also check to see if the protagonist is active. In a dramatic tale, the lead should always be doing things – working to achieve his goal and constantly pushing the narrative forward. A viable protagonist is never passive or reactive.

The next character to assess is the antagonist. Every dramatic narrative must have one, although it doesn't have to be a person (it can be circumstances, a physical or psychological ailment, or a force of nature). Whatever form the antagonist takes, it must be formidable and provide worthy opposition for the protagonist. If it's a person, he or she must also be interesting and well developed.

4. DIALOGUE

In assessing dialogue, the first thing I determine is if it sounds like things real people would say. Or if the dialogue is meant to be stylized, I check to ensure the stylization is consistent throughout the piece. It's also important that each character speak in his/her own unique voice. A script's characters should not all sound the same. Also, do we understand what they're talking about? Does the exposition sound natural? Dialogue should be as tight as possible. The characters should always say what they need to say, but they should not say anything more. If a single line is well-crafted and pointed, the actor will get its meaning across.

5. WRITING

I check to ensure that the writing is cinematic and the story told through action, behavior and dialogue, not through written exposition in the text. I then check to make sure the descriptions are clear. It should always be easy to understand what we'd see happening on screen. I make sure that the script's tone is consistent from beginning to end, that the narrative is well-paced, and that the story builds consistently without a lot of slow or dead spots. Every scene, sequence and subplot in the script should advance the narrative in a meaningful way.

My experience tells me that the more your screenplay matches the criteria laid out in this article, the greater chance it has of succeeding.



Ray Morton is a writer and script consultant. He was a senior writer for *Script* and is currently the author of *Scriptmag.com*'s *Meet the Reader* column.

Ray's recent books [A Quick Guide to Screenwriting](#) and [A Quick Guide to Television Writing](#) are available in stores and online. He analyzes scripts for producers and individual writers, and he is available for private consultation.

You may contact Ray at ray@raymorton.com and follow him on Twitter @RayMorton1.

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PRE-LAP the Competition

by Dave Trottier



Dave Trottier has sold screenplays and developed projects for companies such as The Walt Disney Company, Jim Henson Pictures, York Entertainment, On the Bus Productions, Hill Fields and New Century Pictures.

As a script consultant, he has helped dozens of clients sell their work and win awards. [The Screenwriter's Bible](#), Dave's primer for both aspiring and professional scribes, is perhaps the most comprehensive industry guide on the market.

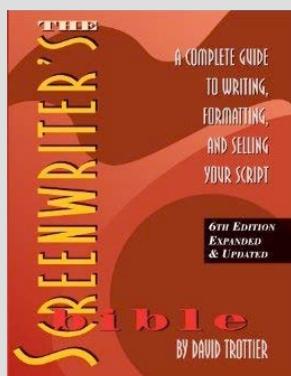
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READER'S QUESTION:

What does PRE-LAP mean, and do we even use it in a spec script?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

A PRE-LAP is a sound transition. Think of the word "overlap"; that is, OVER-LAP. If you understand that word, then you can see that PRE-LAP is somewhat like an OVER-LAP, but the "PRE" means it begins "before." Thus, when a sound at the beginning of a scene actually begins at the end of the previous scene, you have a PRE-LAP.

We seldom use this term in a spec screenplay because a spec generally focuses on the story and not on how that story will be shot or post-produced. Thus, PRE-LAPs are usually planned for the shoot in pre-production. Of course, that's not always the case. If you use the PRE-LAP, be judicious with it.

If the sound you wish to use as a transition is anything but the spoken word, then use the PRE-LAP as follows:

PRE-LAP - The sound of a jet airliner in flight.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

The plane flies toward the World Trade Center.

And yes, you can place the word SOUND in all-CAPS if you prefer.

What if the sound you wish to use as a transition is dialogue? In the scene that follows, you will hear the preacher before you see him. A little later, you will hear a hip-hop song before you see the source.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Sam and Selma stare at each other in silent rapture. He takes her hand.

PREACHER (PRE-LAP)
Do you, Sam Smithers, take Selma Sokolovsky
as your wife...

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

A wedding crowd watches the PREACHER continue.

PREACHER
... through sickness and health, until
death do you part?

Sam looks like he's being strangled by his tie. His eyes dart about.

PRE-LAP - A high-voltage rap song PLAYS.

INT./EXT. CAR

The rap tune PLAYS on the car radio. Sam turns up the volume. He's alone.

EXT. CHAPEL

The car, with "Just married," decorations, screeches away as the crowd exits the chapel, led by an angry Selma.

An alternative to the special term PRE-LAP is to voice over the first speech:

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Sam and Selma stare at each other in silent rapture. He takes her hand.

PREACHER (V.O.)
Do you, Sam Smithers, take Selma Sokolovsky
as your wife...

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

A crowd watches the PREACHER continue.

PREACHER
... And promise to keep writing through
sickness and health?

Why Outlining Will Make Your Life Easier

by Lee Jessup

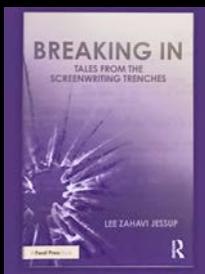


Author of the best-selling book [Getting It Write](#), as well as the newly released [Breaking In: Tales From the Screenwriting Trenches](#), Lee Jessup is a career coach for professional and emerging screenwriters. Her clients include writers who have sold pilots, pitches and specs; staffed television writers; participants in TV writing programs or feature labs; and, of course, writers who are just starting out.

In her role as coach, Lee serves as an industry guidance counselor, adviser, drill sergeant, cheerleader, confidant and strategic partner. Previously, Lee had her own script picked up, worked in development and ran ScriptShark.com for more than 6 years.

To learn more about Lee's services, visit leejessup.com.

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While many writers like to jump straight into pages and see where it takes them, both experienced screenwriters and industry professionals more often prefer to start slow, breaking their story, testing its merit and planning its architecture before they dive in. There is no one way to do it. Some writers like one-pagers detailing the big idea in broad strokes; others go straight into story beats. But these exploratory formats lead to a single destination: the outline.

Not everyone loves outlining. I get that. Some writers feel it takes some of the magic of discovery out of the process. But you wouldn't build a house without agreeing with an architect on a blueprint, would you? For writers working in the industry, outlining is critical. There is no faking it when you outline, no hiding behind literary jazz hands or smoke and mirrors. In an outline, you quickly discover whether your storylines thread through, whether your structure is sound, and whether there are problems that need to be addressed before proper screenwriting ensues.

To help you learn how to write a strong outline, I turned to some of my friends in the expert and consulting space with the following questions: Is outlining important? If so, why? What is the job of the outline? What elements should be included in, or, conversely, excluded from, an outline?

Here is what they had to say...

My good friend TV writing guru Jen Grisanti of [Jen Grisanti Consultancy](#), who also instructs for NBC's Writers on the Verge, told me:

"Writing an outline is very significant to the writing process. When you write an outline, you are able to get your story on the page in a way that helps you to see what is working and what is not working before you go to script. An outline should ideally include a description of each scene and should be divided into acts with some dialogue infused. I tell writers that I should have a sense of the trigger, dilemma and pursuit in each arc."

Ruth Atkinson, who comes from feature development, advised for Sundance Screenwriting Lab and Film Independent, and consults one-on-one with screenwriters, shared this:

"Before you go to pages, work out the main beats and turning points. You're trying to figure out if there's a compelling story that has a good hook and escalates cohesively to the climax. This is easier to do in an outline than when you're writing each scene. When I work with a writer who is going to make substantial changes to their draft, I encourage them to do a revision outline that details the changes... This doc helps writers to see if the changes are going to work, so they can problem-solve ahead of time."

Working television writer and [Script Anatomy](#) maven Tawnya Bhattacharya also shared her insights with me:

"Outlines should summarize the scene, but in a compelling manner. You're telling a story, so it should be entertaining, with dynamic characters pursuing their goals, and conflict. It should set the tone and convey theme."

[No Bull Script's](#) Danny Manus, a seasoned and highly regarded industry consultant, said this:

"I can tell, with about 85% accuracy, if a writer has outlined before they've written. It's usually pretty obvious because the script will feel more cohesive and thorough. An outline will help you structure, help you pace your script, show you where your setups and payoffs are, help track your subplots or other storylines, and ensure you know the purpose of each scene."

I can't tell you how many relatively new writers have told me that they have scripts in their virtual drawer that they quit writing around page 60, despite initially diving in with zeal. Every time I poked and prodded I discovered what caused this: The writer never put together even the roughest of outlines, and instead just started writing.

These days, the only time I don't insist on some sort of outline or beat sheet from writers is when they are my studio writers, my showrunners, my working professional clients. Considering the state of their career, they've earned the right to – at least once in a while – go wild and crazy. But, in my experience, an outline is crucial for writers who are just starting out.



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Budget TBD. Both WGA and non-WGA writers okay.

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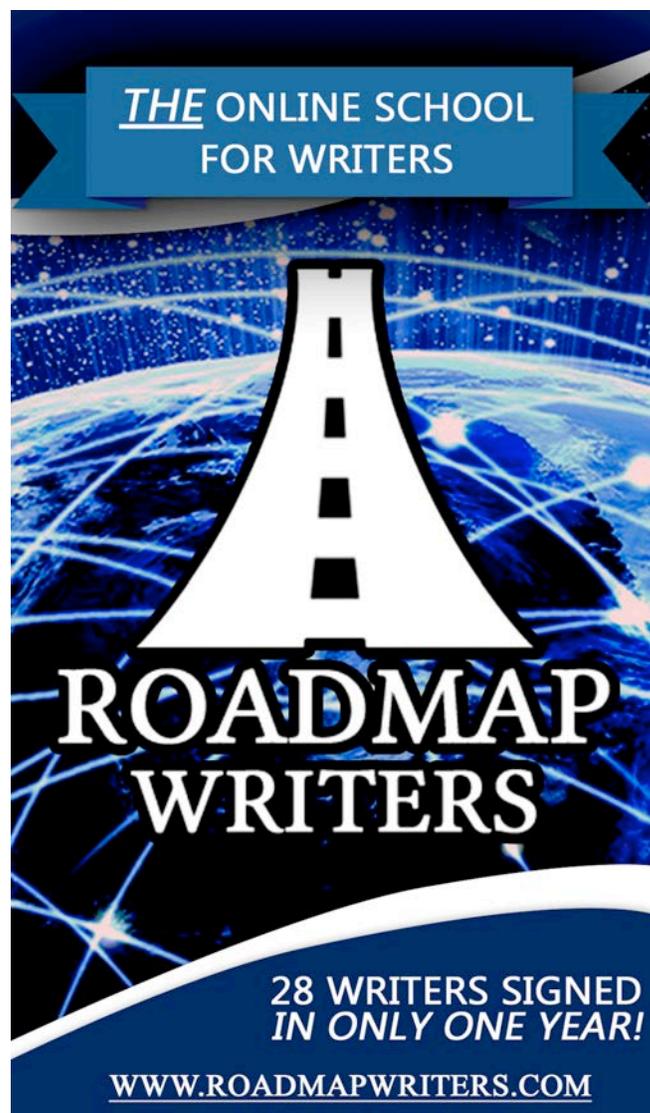
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